

Child Sexual Abuse

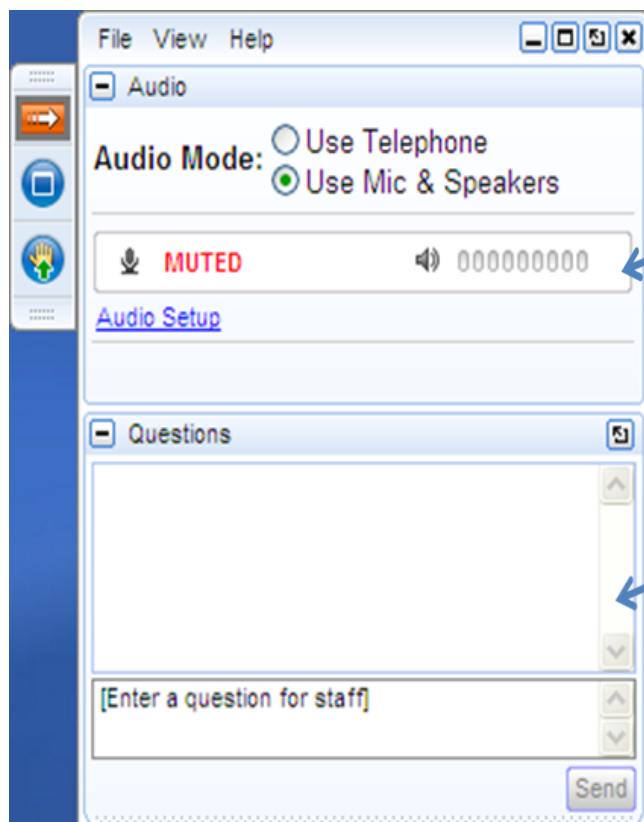
How to Recognize the Signs and How to Help

This presentation is brought to you by the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Through its Missing and Exploited Children's Program (MECP), OJJDP works with a number of Federal and national partners to promote the delivery of Federal services for parents, law enforcement, juvenile justice practitioners, state and local agencies, and nonprofit organizations.

Fox Valley Technical College is the provider that coordinates training and technical assistance activities on behalf of the Missing and Exploited Children's Program.

This webinar is funded through a grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Neither the U.S. Department of Justice nor any of its components, operate, control, are responsible for, or necessarily endorses, this presentation (including, without limitation, its content, technical infrastructure, and policies, and any services or tools provided).

Webinar Housekeeping



Audio Support:

- Use Telephone or Mic & Speakers
- Check 'Audio Setup' for problems
- All callers will be on mute throughout the webinar

To ask a Question:

- Type a question in the box; click Send
- Staff will respond in the 'Questions' box

Facts About Child Sexual Abuse

- More than 10% of all US Children experience some form of child sexual abuse prior to their 18th birthday.
- More than 90% of child sexual abuse is committed by someone the child loves and trusts. Most often this is a parent, step-parent, or a live-in partner of the parent.
- While girls are more often the victim than boys, child sexual abuse of boys is not rare. 26% of victims under the age of 8 are male, and 8% of victims between the ages of 12-17 are male.
- For all child victims, they are most likely to be victimized between the ages of 7-13.
- About 20% of offenders are under the age of 18.

Facts About Child Sexual Abuse

- Isolation contributes to abuse. Children in rural areas are almost 2 times more likely to be identified as victims of abuse.
- Offenders seek out vulnerable children: those who are quiet, lonely, particularly trusting, or troubled. This is one reason that children without either parent, such as children in foster care, are 10 times more likely to be abused than those who live with both biological parents.
- Children of every gender, age, race, ethnicity, socio-economic level, background, and family structure are at risk of abuse.

Signs of Possible Abuse

- Only 1/3 of individuals who report as adults that they were sexually abused as children ever told anyone. This means that 2 out of every three victims does not disclose.
- For those children who do disclose, this is of course the greatest single indicator of their abuse.
- However, given that many children will not disclose unprompted, it is important to be able to recognize possible red flags for and signs of abuse.
- It is important to keep in mind that these signs can also be indicators of other forms of trauma not exclusively abuse.

Signs of Abuse

- Physical signs of sexual abuse (such as STI symptoms or bleeding) are rare.
- Behavioral signs or symptoms are far more common than physical signs of sexual abuse.
- Children vary in their resiliency and therefore in the way that they express trauma.
- Trauma symptoms are variable. Some children may have some trauma symptoms. Some children may have one trauma symptom. Some children may have no trauma symptoms prior to disclosure but later develop them.

Possible Signs of Abuse or Trauma

- Symptoms of anxiety
 - This can include: unexplained sleep disturbance; showing a new or unusual fear of certain people, places, or locations; or having unexplained periods of panic or alarm.
- Abnormal sexual behavior or symptoms:
 - This can include: initiating sophisticated sexual behaviors, language, or knowledge; engaging in persistent and inappropriate sexual play with friends, toys, pets.

Possible Signs of Abuse or Trauma

- Regressive and Self-soothing Behaviors
 - Regression to behaviors too young for the stage of development previously achieved (thumb-sucking, bedwetting, encopresis).
- Risk-taking or Self-harming Behaviors (especially in teens)
 - Sudden use of alcohol or drugs to self-medicate.
 - Sexual promiscuity
 - Cutting
 - Suicidal ideation or attempts.

Possible Signs of Abuse or Trauma

- Changes in Personality or Mood
 - Becoming unusually withdrawn, or isolated.
Depressed.
 - Becoming unusually aggressive.
 - Sudden reluctance to be alone with a certain person.
 - Changes in school performance.
- Unusually Secretive Behavior
 - Unwillingness to talk about a secret shared with an older child or adult.
 - Discussions about a new, older friend.
 - Unexplained gifts, expensive clothing, or outings.

Impact of Child Sexual Abuse on Victims

- More likely to become pregnant as a teenager, drop out of school, abuse substances, and experience anxiety and depression.
- Child sexual abuse victims left untreated have increased morbidity and mortality over their non-abused counterparts.

Impact of Child Sexual Abuse on Victims

- Women who were sexually abused as girls are more likely to have children who are sexually abused than their non-abused peers.
- Individuals can become isolated as they try to avoid trauma reminders and triggers.

Multi-Disciplinary Teams

- Determine team members
 - Established teams
 - Investigation centered teams
- Child advocacy centers
- Determine member roles
- Team meetings

Why Multi-Disciplinary Teams?

- Effective investigations
 - One interview
 - Investigative help
 - Investigative collaboration
 - Better decisions
- Everyone is on the same page

Child Sexual Abuse Investigations

- Get past the shock
- Don't let anger affect perspective
- Know your role

Investigative Issues

- Believability
 - “How could anyone do this?”
 - Lack of physical evidence
 - Victim changes story
- Timeline
 - Why did you wait so long to report
 - Victim doesn't remember details

Victim Issues

- Victim interview
 - Traditional problems encountered in interviewing children
 - Child may protect offender

Victim Issues

- May be motivated not to tell
- May deny or minimize victimization
- May exaggerate force used
- May have received a gift

Offender Issues

- Characteristics
 - Preferences
 - Child pornography
 - Recidivism
- Interview style

Mental Health Treatment

- Mental health treatment for child victims of abuse is essential to their well-being.
- Studies have shown that the greatest predictor of child well-being following abuse is the receipt of support and treatment. Child sexual abuse investigations are a gateway to treatment.
- Over the past decade we have learned a great deal about which mental health treatments are most effective with children who have suffered sexual abuse.
- There are approximately 30 trauma-focused, evidence-supported mental health treatments. A list may be found on NCTSN.org.

Mental Health Treatment

- Trauma-focused, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy has the most research support for child victims between the ages of 7-17.
- Child victims receiving 8-12 sessions of TF-CBT have been shown to have significant reduction in trauma symptoms.
- All trauma-focused, evidence supported treatment has some common elements: trauma-specific assessment, assessment using standardized measures, caregiver engagement, crisis intervention services, individualized treatment plans, individualized evidence-supported treatment, referral to community services as needed, and clinical supervision.
- For more information visit the National Child Traumatic Stress Network at NCTSN.org

Resources

- Signs of Child Abuse (PDF)
 - <http://mecptraining.org/wp-content/uploads/Signs-of-Abuse.pdf>
- Myths about Child Abuse (PDF)
 - <http://mecptraining.org/wp-content/uploads/Myths-About-Abuse.pdf>

Resources

- National Children's Alliance
(<http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/>)
 - Child Advocacy Centers
 - One with Courage (<http://www.onewithcourage.org/about-us/>)
- OJJDP Training and Technical Assistance programs
(coordinated by Fox Valley Technical College)
 - <https://www.thecjportal.org/Pages/Default.aspx>